



Message from the Governor

April 2004

SUPPORT FOR OUR STATE EMPLOYEES

Whether it's for a driver's license, a building permit or a vital public health service, at some time or other, every North Dakotan will be served in some important way by a public employee of our state. You keep our state working efficiently, and provide quality services to thousands of our citizens every day. Because you work so hard, North Dakota works well, day in and day out.

That's why in 2001, I proposed, and got, a five percent salary increase for state workers. In the most recent legislative session, I pushed for a three percent increase, and when the Legislature didn't include that in the final budget, I vetoed the measure in an effort to have it restored. Because of a nearly 20 percent increase in state employees' health insurance benefits, the Legislature was unwilling to fund a sal-

ary increase without additional reductions in the number of state employees, beyond those we had already built into our budget. They proposed a plan that we tried to make work, but in the end, proved unworkable.

I have consistently supported reasonable pay increases for our state employees, and will continue to do so. Like the citizens of North Dakota, I appreciate your hard work and dedication. We are committed to making sure that our public employees share in the progress we are making in North Dakota.



Governor John Hoeven

Governor's Award for Excellence

Do you have someone in your office that goes above and beyond what is expected of them? You should think about nominating them for the Governor's Award for Excellence. Start thinking now about getting your nominations ready. State Employee Recognition Week is not till September, but it is never too early to get the forms and start filling them out. If you are interested in nominating someone, please go to the website listed below or contact any COSE member to have a hard copy sent to you.

www.state.nd.us/cose



COSE Clothing

available online at

<http://www.state.nd.us/cose/cloths.htm>

State Employee Discounts—Grand Forks

Hi, my name is Leyton Rodahl and I am a Board member of COSE. One of the missions of COSE is to enhance and improve state employee morale. I am working on a plan to do just that for the state employees in the Grand Forks area. Bismarck has an employee discount program that is working very well and I thought we should have this in Grand Forks as well.

I started to write letters to local businesses to see if they would be interested in offering discounts to state employees. Here is how the program



works. We list the businesses' name and service or product that they are offering and get the word out to state employees. This is a totally free service we are offering to the companies. I have received about a dozen responses so far but I am getting more all the time.

Some of the discounts may not apply to all people all the time. Check out our website to see what we have to offer. It is nice to see the local businesses willing to give us a break. This is a work in progress and I will continue to update the website as I receive more businesses that want to participate. I hope the state employees of the GF area will take advantage of this.

Here are the companies that are on board for the state employees of North Dakota in Grand Forks so far.

All Pets Hospital
Big Jim's Tire Service
Border States Trophy and Awards
Bud and Ralph's Appliance Service
Dakota Science Center
Grand Auto Mart
Lakeview Inns and Suites
Maves Optical
Norby's Work Perks
Super 8 Inn of Grand Forks
Travelodge
Unicel Wireless
Valley Vision Clinic – Washington Optical

NDSD Implements New Student Training Program...

The North Dakota School for the Deaf (NDSD) recently started a program to provide vocational experience/training to NDSD students 14 years of age and older. The goal of this program is to give the student trainee functional training to develop on-the-job skills, the opportunity to deal with people outside the home and school environment, and the self-confidence and experience to pursue gainful employment after leaving NDSD.

Four students have successfully completed the training with Devils Lake businesses. The areas of training were dental equipment sanitizing and cataloging; auto body assistant; environmental services at a hospital; and plumber's assistant. This has been a very positive experience for both the students and employers and has exceeded our expectations! NDSD hopes to expand the program to serve hard of hearing and deaf individuals



currently not served by NDSD and possibly include services to deaf adults in need of job training. For more information about our program, please feel free to contact us.

Scott Craven
Director of Student Life
North Dakota School for the Deaf

Letter from Laurie Sterioti Hammeren on Proposed Administrative Rules Changes

There has been some confusion about the administrative rules recently proposed by ND Human Resource Management Services for state agencies and employees. I appreciate this opportunity to clarify the proposals.

The proposed rules are the result of legislative changes and the recommendations of a task force of Human Resource professionals representing 10 major state agencies. The public comment period is open until April 12, 2004, and all suggestions for improvements to the proposed rules will be given careful consideration. Written comments may be sent to Laurie Sterioti Hammeren, 600 E. Boulevard Ave., Dept. 113, Bismarck ND 58505-0120. Our goal is to arrive at rules that serve state employees and our citizens.

The proposed rules clarify three areas that have generated some comment:

First, the definition of "cause" was changed to clarify the existing standards and make it consistent with the definition of "cause" recently used by the North Dakota Supreme Court. The revised definition ensures that the reasons for discipline are not "trivial, arbitrary or capricious," but are directly related to the needs of the organization and supported by substantial evidence. The definition also requires that employees receive notice of their misconduct and have an opportunity to respond to the discipline.

Second, we addressed the use of progressive discipline - discipline that begins with a less severe action and progresses to a more severe action based on the degree of the behavior. Progressive discipline continues to be appropriate under the proposed rules unless the behavior is so egregious as to warrant more severe discipline. We have proposed adding an additional instance when progressive discipline is not required to be used, and that is when an employee threatens to harm another employee. This was added as a safety measure to protect employees.

The other change we made was that "other appropriate factors" may be considered in determining the correct level of discipline. These must be work related and clearly stated. This simply clarifies what has long been the practice of state agencies and is entirely consistent with the current rule.

Finally, we addressed how decisions are to be made when an agency is forced to implement a reduction in force, and what rights to reemployment are retained by those who lose their jobs due to a reduction in force.

The rules were amended to eliminate rigid and sometimes overlapping comparative factors and allow agencies the flexibility of tailoring the comparative analysis to each set of circumstances as it pertains to work remaining to be done in the future following a reduction in force.

In the existing rules, certain factors, such as seniority, have to be used when considering which employees would retain their employment. In the proposed rules, agencies may use seniority or years of service as a factor. However, retaining qualified employees with the knowledge, skills and abilities needed to do the work following the reduction in force would remain the primary focus. Again, this is entirely consistent with the current rules except for the elimination of the rigid comparative factors.

Cont. on page 4 - Changes

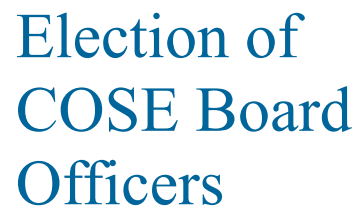
In the existing rules, an employee who lost employment due to a reduction in force had an automatic right to be hired for a new position if he or she met the minimum requirements. This could result in a former employee being entitled to a considerably higher level position or a different position for which the employee is only marginally qualified. In the proposed rules, that employee has a right to be interviewed and considered for employment if the minimum qualifications are met, but the hiring decision will be based on determining who is best qualified to do the work.

The administrative rules are available at our office on the 14th floor of the Capitol or at www.discovernd.com/hrms.

Laurie Sterioti Hammeren, SPHR
Director, ND Human Resource Mgmt. Svcs.

The Bismarck-Mandan area has added several new companies to the area discount list. J&D Custom, Curves for Women, Ferrell Gas, and Northern Plains Ballet Co. are just a few of the local companies that offer discounts to State workers.

Fish Award Nominees



President—Dave Senne
Vice President—Barb Duncan
Secretary —Becky Rosenkranz
Treasurer—Tina Freidt

Fish Awards

Friendly
Initiative
Smile
Helpful



Developed by the State COSE Board of Directors, the Fish Award:

- ❖ Symbolizes excellence in customer service,
- ❖ Recognizes employees who promote customer service in state government,
- ❖ Acknowledges employees who model excellence in customer service to other fellow State Employees,
- ❖ Exemplifies the standard "We all have a customer; we all provide service to others," and
- ❖ Recognizes employees who understand that "Providing customer service is part of our job."

For more information on this award, or to nominate someone, contact your COSE representative. All nominations must be received by April 8, 2004 to be eligible for the this quarters award. Nomination forms can be found on the web at www.state.nd.us/cose/ or from your COSE representative.

This newsletter is published three times a year by the North Dakota Council of State Employees (COSE). State employees are encouraged to submit articles or information about their agencies or institutions to their subgroup listed below. Any comments and concerns should also be directed to your subgroup chair listed below. Editorial Board: COSE Board of Directors. Publisher: Tina Freidt, 600 East Blvd. Ave, Bismarck, ND 58505

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Council Of State Employees